

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



### W. Dean Kinzley, *Industrial Harmony in Modern Japan. The Invention of a Tradition*

Martin M. Perline

Volume 47, numéro 1, 1992

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050753ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/050753ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Perline, M. M. (1992). Compte rendu de [W. Dean Kinzley, *Industrial Harmony in Modern Japan. The Invention of a Tradition*]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 47(1), 164–166. <https://doi.org/10.7202/050753ar>

La nature des liens politiques du mouvement syndical vénézuélien de 1958 à nos jours est examinée par Steve Ellner. À l'aide d'exemples précis, l'auteur démontre que les relations entre le Congrès des travailleurs du Vénézuéla et la section syndicale du parti politique au pouvoir, l'Action démocratique, a toujours été beaucoup plus houleuse qu'on voudrait le croire. La chute du prix du pétrole et la crise de 1982 ont marqué les relations entre le CTV et l'AD en faisant apparaître clairement l'opposition entre les besoins des travailleurs et ceux des entrepreneurs, opposition qui était jusque là cachée par les gains produits par le boom pétrolier. Lors de la grève du 18 mai 1989, le CTV affronte ouvertement l'AD et cet événement illustre la nature contradictoire des liens politiques de l'organisation syndicale au Vénézuéla.

Enfin, Nelson Fréitez s'intéresse à l'organisation des travailleurs de l'économie informelle dans deux secteurs d'occupations. D'une part, se rencontrent dans le secteur informel structurel des activités permettant une accumulation relative de capital, tels des ateliers de réparation et des micro-entreprises de fabrication artisanale. Trois phénomènes limitent l'organisation des travailleurs de ce secteur: 1) le nombre d'employés est inférieur à celui requis par la loi pour former un syndicat; 2) le patron travaillant à égalité avec ses employés, sa présence gêne l'action de ceux-ci; 3) les organisations syndicales ignorent ce secteur. Il existe certains regroupements de micro-entreprises dont l'action vise l'amélioration de la productivité et l'accès aux marchés. D'autre part, le secteur informel conjoncturel se compose d'activités transitoires où la compétition est des plus féroces comme c'est le cas pour les vendeurs ambulants. L'organisation de ces travailleurs est restreinte par leur instabilité, la précarité de leur travail et l'absence de proximité physique requise par l'organisation. Il existe au Vénézuéla des syndicats de travailleurs à leur propre compte qui s'emploient à protéger les aires d'opération en contrôlant le nombre de nouveaux venus et à les défendre contre la persécution policière.

La lecture de ce document est particulièrement enrichissante pour qui veut connaître les questions qui préoccupent actuellement les spécialistes des relations industrielles en Amérique latine, et plus particulièrement au Vénézuéla. Chaque thème y est bien défini et replacé dans son cadre historique, politique, économique et social, de sorte que la compréhension du lecteur étranger est grandement favorisée. Signalons enfin que l'ouvrage *Las relaciones de trabajo en los noventa* n'est disponible que dans sa version originale espagnole.

**Michèle BILODEAU**

Université Laval

**Industrial Harmony in Modern Japan: The Invention of a Tradition**, by W. Dean Kinzley, London, Routledge, 1991, XVII, 190 p., ISBN 0-415-05167-3

In an era when much of the industrialized world is looking at Japanese labor-management relations as a model to emulate, W. Dean Kinzley's book *Industrial Harmony in Modern Japan* is a welcome addition to the industrial relations literature.

This volume published as part of the Nissan Institute/Routledge Japanese Studies Series, had its origin as a Ph.D. dissertation. Basically it serves as background for contemporary Japanese labor relations by dealing with the manner in which these relations were originated in Japan between World Wars I and II.

As is well documented, the Japanese industrial relations system is known for its spirit of harmony between workers and managers and identified by such specifics as participatory management, lifetime employment and enterprise unions. The principal question the author addresses is the extent to which this harmony is a function of ancient Japanese custom or a more modern phenomenon created to deal with the Japanese desire to industrialize and effectually compete with the western world following World War I.

In addressing this important question, Kinzley gives a brief historical background and then traces the contribution of the Kyochoikai (The Cooperative and Harmony Society) in meeting this challenge. As a matter of fact, to a large extent, this is more a study of the Kyochoikai as an organization than it is a study of the development of Japanese labor-management relations *per se*.

By the end of World War I, Japan was emerging as an industrialized nation, and with this industrialization the time was ripe for the advent of a western style labor movement with the attendant conflicts it could generate. Such developments created difficulties for a government concerned with industrialization and this concern was accentuated by memories of the Russian revolution as well as the Rice Riots which rocked Japan in 1918. It was in this environment that House Minister Tokonami Takejiro and prominent industrialist Shibusawa Eiichi met, and took steps toward the creation of an organization to address labor and social problems. Shortly thereafter, in December, 1919, the Kyochoikai was launched. Though not a government body *per se* it was the first agency established under the auspices of the Japanese government that had labor and social problems as its sole concern. While the organization was to be neutral in its relations with labor and capital its original directors were all government bureaucrats or capitalists. (Apparently labor viewed the Kyochoikai as nothing more than an effort to undermine unions and therefore refused to support it.)

While a central purpose of the Kyochoikai was to settle disputes between labor and capital its original proposal also stipulated that

"the organization would offer lectures and classes as well as provide libraries and other information resources to help educate workers; establish labor exchanges to meliorate the problems of the unemployed; help mediate labor disputes wherever possible and practicable; act as a research body on social conditions and social policy questions; and create other necessary agencies and institutions when appropriate and feasible" (p. 50).

While as founder of the organization Tokonami strongly believed in harmony and cooperation and the equal value of labor and capital, he was opposed to traditional European style trade unionism. It was his belief that such unions were a "poison" that created conflict between labor and management. He

much preferred small scale vertical unions which could serve as a communication device between labor and management. Thus the Kyochokai was created to put into place a model of industrial harmonism that represented such thinking. Ultimately this philosophic stance came to dominate the intellectual and ideological character of interwar labor relations in Japan.

While this philosophy manifested a concern for the worker and social reform, one senses a somewhat paternalistic approach which attempted to forestall protective legislation on the grounds that such legislation was unnecessary in a society where there was mutual respect and friendship in the workplace. Although the harmony of Japanese industrial relations is contrasted with the conflict evident in the West, there was never much doubt that Japanese management like its Western counterpart, intended to stifle traditional trade unionism and maintain control of its prerogatives. Although called by other names in Japan, one is reminded of various employee representation plans and other forms of welfare capitalism practiced in the West, during this same period of time. As a matter of fact, given the many cultural differences between Japan and the West, it is surprising how much overlap there was between the approaches to industrial relations in these very diverse parts of the world.

As to the question of whether harmony and cooperation were a function of ancient Japanese custom or a modern program put into place to assist Japanese industrialization, the author leaves little doubt. To quote Kinzley:

"What this study has shown, ...is that this tradition,... was consciously invented and propagated over the last century. It did not emerge of itself. The Kyochokai and earlier Meiji reformers, seeking to meet the situational needs of an emerging industrial society, were agents of its creation" (p. 150).

Overall, this brief volume provides a good view of the role of the Kyochokai in Japanese industrial relations between the Wars. Aside from a few minor annoyances (not adequately defining some terms and insisting on periodically providing a transliteration from the Japanese for other terms), the reading of this book is a good investment of one's time.

**Martin M. PERLINE**

Wichita State University

**Organizations: Behavior, Structure, Processes** (7th. ed.), par James L. Gibson, John M. Ivancevich, and James H. Jr. Donnelly, Homewood, Ill., Richard D. Irwin inc., 1991, 774 p., ISBN 0-256-08046-1

La recension d'un volume de base en comportement humain au travail (*organizational behavior*) représente toujours un exercice un peu fastidieux et répétitif; la recette généralement utilisée pour l'élaboration des «textbooks» américains est bien connue et varie peu d'un auteur à l'autre. C'est, entre autres, ce pourquoi des revues comme *Psychological Review* ou *Personnel Psychology* regroupent et évaluent comparativement de tels ouvrages lors de leur parution.